

Stanley Gaining Recognition As A Center For Arts

By Stacy Fiedler

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AT FIRST GLANCE, Stanley seems like most other towns in rural North Dakota. There are a couple of banks, a few restaurants, and a handful of churches. A second glance reveals creatively painted fire hydrants, a historic fine arts building, and sculptures in the park downtown. An even closer look shows a humble but talented collection of local painters and sculptors quietly giving Stanley recognition as a home for great art and culture.

Sibyl Center for Life Enrichment

In 1973, longtime Stanley resident and piano teacher Sibyl MacDonald died and left her entire estate to various charities, including the First Presbyterian Church.

After the 1928 Tudor-style church closed, the city owned the building until 2002, when it was donated to a group of people who converted it into a center for life enrichment. "The city tried to use the old church as a library and youth center but weren't successful. A group of people finally asked to turn it into an art center. After fundraisers and generous donations, the Sibyl Art Center opened," says Stan Wright, chairman of the board for the Sibyl Center.

Since the historical Sibyl Center has been open it's hosted everything from Chinese dancers to historical speakers to big band-style dances. "We don't like to limit ourselves with the performers we bring in. We host a variety of events; some are musical and some aren't," says Secretary of the Board of Directors Tyra Rolf.

The mission of the Sibyl Center is well defined. It is to be a major focal point for the arts in western North Dakota and to enrich the quality of life in Stanley and surrounding communities by encouraging learning, youth development and the arts. Because there is no charge for any of the events, this mission relies heavily upon generous donations of time and money, which Wright says has been "amazingly successful."

Photo courtesy
of Liala Schulte



Stanley's former First Presbyterian Church is now the Sibyl Center for Life Enrichment.

Photo courtesy of Tyra Rolf



The Sibyl Center doesn't hold events in the winter, but will resume programming again in the spring and summer. For upcoming events check the website at www.sibylcenter.org.

Painted Fire Hydrants

In 1976 when Girl Scout leader Liala Schulte and her troop decided to participate in the 'National Paint a Plug for America' initiative for the U.S. Bicentennial, they had no idea how involved the project would become.

Painting all the fire hydrants in Stanley to look like little people involved more than just the Girl Scouts; it took the whole community. "People from all over were painting fire hydrants. A lot of talented people were involved in the project," says Schulte. As a result "people" like Uncle Sam, Walt Disney, Abe Lincoln, Amelia Earhart, and John Wayne still grace Stanley street corners. "My favorite is Teddy Roosevelt," says Schulte.

These painted hydrants have lasted much longer than expected. "I'm sure other communities have painted over their fire hydrants, but we're proud of ours," says Schulte. She is still involved in preserving the painted fire hydrants, but the American Legion Auxiliary has taken over most of the maintenance. "I've never done any painting, but I've sure scrubbed a lot of them."

High School Arts

When Jenette Nelson started teaching high school art in Stanley, she taught one class each day. Six years later, she says, "I have a full load of classes both semesters, and I have more students than I can fit into junior high art."

To support its growing arts program, the Stanley High School holds a student art show in the basement of the Scandia American Bank every spring. Last year, the bank offered

to make its basement the permanent home for the art show. "The bank has agreed to let us paint a mural on a wall before we have our next show," says Nelson. Art students will also be painting a mural in the high school music room. "Before we start painting, we are going to the Lutheran Church in Stanley to study a mural by local artist Julie Mell. She's a fabulous artist and has been very helpful in teaching Stanley students about art," says Nelson.

"I don't profess to bring students to a fully accomplished artist level," said Nelson. "I just try to motivate them to love art and increase their self-confidence to try art."

Native Sculptors

Arnold Addicott didn't see himself as a sculptor. He was a contractor, not an artist. Fourteen years ago, that changed. "I had some free time during the winter, and just decided to start sculpting," says Addicott.

Today Addicott sculpts full-time and has his own foundry – the High Prairie Arts Studio – for sculpting, pouring and assembling his work. Addicott has sculpted numerous busts, including one of North Dakota Supreme Court Justice Ralph Erickstad that is outside the courtrooms at the state capitol. He also sculpted a statue for the Stanley centennial celebration that now rests in Stanley's Wilson Park.

Some of Addicott's most recent work was for the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame in Medora. "It was a long project," says Addicott. "I worked on it for about three and a half years." Addicott completed two large (one is 22 feet tall and the other is 14) sculptures that flank the entrance to the Hall of Fame, one of a trail driver driving four longhorn cattle and another of a Native American hunting a buffalo.

"I met Arnie 10 or 12 years ago," says Darrell Dorgan, executive director for the Cowboy Hall of Fame. "About six years ago he said he'd like to do the sculptures for the Hall of Fame, and went ahead and made models for the board. We liked that he's from North Dakota and understands the history behind the sculptures. We've been very impressed with his talents."

Dave Kulczyk was a cattle rancher until his son became ill with spinal meningitis. While his wife was in Minot with their son, Kulczyk was home with their other children. "I guess I had some time on my hands, so I did some sculpting," says Kulczyk.

Kulczyk, who says he's most inspired by the work of Auguste Rodin and especially his sculpture *The Thinker*, began in 1978 and he has been sculpting and carving ever since.

Kulczyk is most known for his sculpture that was commissioned by the U.S. Marshals for the United States bicentennial. He also sculpted the Roughrider Welcome that sat in the governor's office for North Dakota's centennial celebration. "Sculpting and carving were fun hobbies that turned into a way to make a living," says Kulczyk. "I still sculpt, but I'm semi-retired and am starting to play around in carving and using other mediums."



Jenette Nelson with some of her art students at Stanley High School.
Photo by Betty Leith

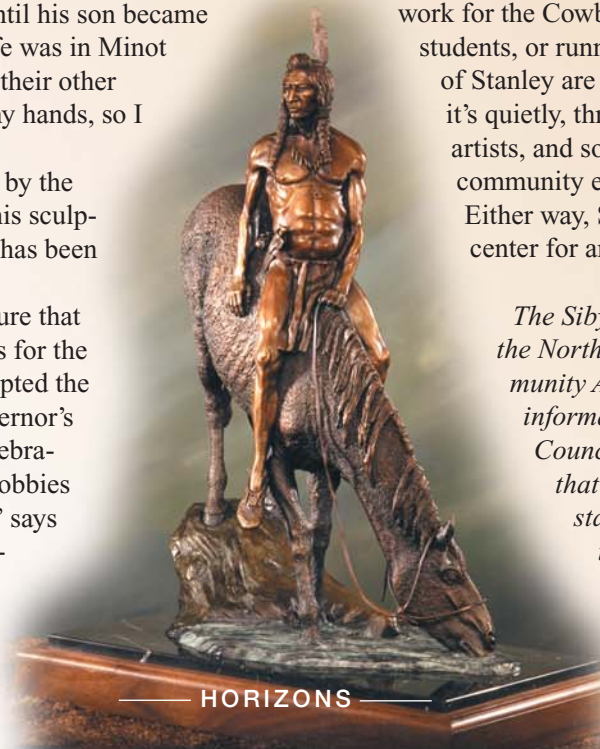
Most recently, Kulczyk has tried carving in salt blocks, like the ones found in cattle stalls. "I heard about someone else carving them and thought I'd try it. It's interesting, but you are definitely limited by what you can do with a salt block," says Kulczyk.

Gwen Thronson started painting when she was in her late 60s. The Rogaland style of rosemaling painting Thronson first learned proved to be her favorite. Now, some 30 years later at the age of 94, Thronson is still painting the Norwegian folk art.

Thronson took lessons from three different teachers and began her first painting on driftwood before she moved into oil painting and finally rosemaling. "It was one of the first styles I was exposed to and I've been painting it ever since," says Thronson.

Thronson used to commission her paintings and take them to regional art shows. "I'm almost 95 years old," says Thronson. "I don't go to art shows or commission my paintings. I donate a painted plate to the church auction once year, but that's all. I'm painting for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren now."

Whether it's carving in salt blocks, commissioning work for the Cowboy Hall of Fame, inspiring art students, or running a fine arts center, the citizens of Stanley are involved in the arts. Sometimes it's quietly, through the individual works of local artists, and sometimes it's loudly, through the community events held at the Sibyl Center. Either way, Stanley is proclaiming itself as a center for arts.



The Sibyl Center receives funding through the North Dakota Council on the Arts Community Arts Access program. For more information about the North Dakota Council on the Arts and its programs that support communities across the state, call 701-328-7590, or visit its website at www.discovernd.com/arts.

"Chaska" by Dave Kulczyk